In Attendance: Krista Holtzman (DCSD), Dan Jorgenson (APS), Janice McDonald (CCSD), Kelly Perez (LPS), and Sue Sava (PEBC)

Staff: Chad Burns, Julie Stelzer, and Cris Veteto

Guests: There were a large number of guests at the meeting, including staff, students, and parents, some of whom signed up to speak during open forum. Those names are included in the minutes in the open forum section.

Kelly welcomed everyone to the meeting and called the board meeting to order.

Approval of Agenda
Kelly asked for a motion to approve the agenda. Krista made a motion to amend the agenda to include an executive session per C.R.S. § 24-6-402(4)(b) for the purposes of meeting with the BOCES’ attorney to receive legal advice on specific legal questions concerning compliance with RMSEL’s complaint procedures, which will take place following the open forum and public comments. Sue seconded the motion. The agenda was unanimously approved as amended.

Approval of Minutes
Kelly asked for a motion to approve the minutes. Dan made a motion to approve the minutes, and Krista seconded. The minutes were unanimously approved.

Executive Director Report
Before reading his executive director report, which is included below in its entirety for the minutes, Chad commented that there was another expeditionary learning school which spent the night in the RMSEL campus last night while they were traveling. The group was visible, as they were preparing to leave RMSEL as the board meeting was beginning.

Rocky Mountain School of Expeditionary Learning
We Are Crew!

Tuesday, September 24, 2019

Executive Director Report

Communication Summary
1. Bond – Investment Rating “Ba1”
2. BEST – Building Schematic Design Option(s)
3. District Accountability Committee
4. Teacher Leadership Team(s)
5. Fall Crew Trips & Spring Planning
6. District Partnerships
7. Professional Development

Bond – Investment Rating “Ba1”

Our public tax exempt Bond is out to market at this time as posted by Jim Blandford, Managing Director of Public Finance for the underwriting firm Baird & Co. This is a public posting and the debt service is currently for sale through a pricing window set to conclude on September 25, 2019, with a projected closing date of Tuesday, October 8, 2019. As a part of this process, Moody’s Investor Service was required to provide a credit rating to the BOCES. This investment rating was an analysis of our financial capacity as related to the institutional operations and achievement of the school. This investment rating was conducted under the leadership of Ben VanMetre, Associate Analyst, Moody’s Public Finance Group. A committee reviews his finding and proceeds to post a final rating. Unfortunately,
rating was found to be one step below investment grade at “Ba1.” In the public posting, it states this is due to a few primary factors; the material findings were due to 1) a decline in High School enrollment for the 2019-2020 SY, while enrollment history is strong the current number creates a decrease in revenue from PPR 2) Denver Public Schools maintained a position that if they elected to exit the Intergovernmental Agreement (IGA), that this would trigger a default in the ground lease requiring RMSEL to vacate campus within a two year period. RMSEL will not receive any payment for debt service from Denver Public Schools made up to the time of dismissal; however, Denver Public Schools would take on liability to pay any outstanding debt or find a new tenant in the event of a withdrawal from the IGA. This clause is unlike any other default clause in choice or charter programs analyzed by Moody’s. The investment rating did note the organizational design, success, and stability of the Board of Cooperative Educational Services (BOCES) for the stable governance structure of elected officials and appointment of an at-large professional. This is an asset and strength of our school and long standing success as compared to other choice programs and charters. It is to be noted at this time that “Ba1” pricing is at the same rate as investment grade rating six months prior due to the inverted market yield curve. We should still receive a rate in alignment with our financial forecast.

BEST – Building Schematic Design Option(s)

The team led by Scott Dangle, Architect, TreanorHL is in the final phase of completing Schematic Design. We have a few architectural renderings of the exterior of campus that we shared with our community last week, which truly makes this exciting project come to life. Our current campus was built in three phases, which has presented a degree of challenge as the team works to complete the final design. The team at JHL Construction is working collaboratively with the team at TreanorHL to find the most cost effective solution to stay within the Educational Program Scope of Design and structural limitations of the Community Room renovations. The team is exploring renovation vs. replacement to this space at this time. The team has presented two design options and they are now in pre-construction pricing to ensure that each design can work within the project budget.

District Accountability Committee

I want to take this opportunity to thank our DAC Chair, Margaret Bierman, and DAC Vice Chair, Megan Kane, for their organization of the recent RMSEL Rally at Cherry Creek State Park on Sunday, September 15, 2019. In addition to their leadership and organization, I want to thank the magnitude of volunteers they enlisted to ensure this event was a success. DAC welcomed over 200 participants to the 5K Run/Walk! This was a great gathering of the RMSEL Community.

I also want to thank teacher leader, Eric Dinkel, and the RMSEL Student Government for their volunteer service and support of the event. They were course marshals, timers, set-up and everything in between. DAC Student Representative and RMSEL Student Government leader, Kalon Shepard, should also be recognized for her leadership of the team in support of the event.

Finally, on September 10, 2019, DAC engaged in the public revision of their By Laws. This was a carryover work from the previous school year and expands the opportunity for additional parent leadership and involvement. The DAC has revised a position and currently has two open positions that will be posted for public interest. All interest letters are reviewed and voted upon by the Executive Committee. I commend the work of this team for creating more opportunities for parents to take on leadership opportunities and support the fundraising efforts of this amazing team.

Teacher Leadership

We had nine RMSEL teachers apply for leadership team positions this year. Leadership Team members are integral for shared decision making and feedback that continues to support our school mission and vision. We have two leadership teams, 1) Leadership Team 2) Professional Development Leadership Team. The Leadership team provides feedback and support to school operations and the Professional Development Leadership Team designs and implements the school work plan and weekly professional development with our two onsite instructional coaches, John Stene and Brittany Sundgren.
Please join me in recognizing:

**Leadership Team**
Eric Dinkel  
Leah Wesselman  
David Sheldon

**Professional Development Leadership Team**
Ian Silberman  
Nicole Hooks  
Elizabeth Spruill

Also note that the Leadership Team is also sitting, non-voting members of the District Accountability Committee.

**Fall Crew Trips & Spring Planning**

Just last week all 100 7th/8th grade students embarked on their fall crew trip. Two crews were backpacking for 5 days/4 Nights in the Colorado State Forest, and two crews were in Saratoga, WY canoeing for 3 days/2 Nights and then rotating with the other crew to complete the trip rock climbing in Vedauwoo, WY. I want to thank our amazing staff of teachers, contract wilderness first responders, adventure leadership, and parent volunteers. Our trips truly embody our design principles and our motto of "we are crew, not passengers."

I also want to commend our office staff and intermediate teachers, Leah Wesselman and Sam Brown. Last week, they encountered a planning oversight in which they planned fieldwork for our 4th/5th grade students and needed access to our buses. Unfortunately, all our buses were out with 7th/8th grade students. Instead of cancelling, our Crew Parents supported them with arranging car pools and students to meet the crew leaders at Cherry Creek State Park, so that the students could still engage in sailing as scheduled. Once again, this is the strength of our community and crew.

I want to also acknowledge 7th/8th grade Humanities Teacher and Crew Leader, Skyler Golann. Sky was a resident teacher with the PEBC last year that accompanied our students on the 8th grade capstone trip to Birmingham along with instructional coach, John Stene. Sky found this to be an amazing trip; however, it was a passive engagement of history. In observing this, Sky created a vision to have our students become actively engaged in humanitarian and civil rights continuing in our country. Sky’s vision is to create a capstone experience that provides the opportunity to be actively engaged in human and civil rights, current issues within our country. Sky would like our students to engage with the Oglala Lakota, a tribe of Sioux people on the Pine Ridge Reservation in South Dakota. The reservation spans 2.8 million acres and has a fluctuating unemployment rate between 80-90% annually, of which the median income is less than $4,000 per year; 98% of residents live below the federal poverty level. The reservation also has the second lowest life expectancy in the western hemisphere, just one place above the Caribbean country of Haiti. For our students to be involved in domestic, human, and civil rights of the reservation in our country is a powerful vision. I commend Sky on his passion, commitment, and willingness to push the learning, thinking, and engagement of our students and our community.

Sky is currently meeting with a local foundation to understand program options on the reservation with the Tipi Raisers and a team of professors at the University of Colorado Center for American Indian and Alaska Native Health. I appreciate this type of vision, planning, and dedication of our teaching staff to enrich and engage students in current issues within our country.

**District Partnerships**

I want to recognize our partnership with the Cherry Creek School District Elevate Program for providing Foreign Language courses to high school students. Our students now have access to multiple language levels and courses. I understand that our decision last year to discontinue onsite language programming K-8 in order to increase teacher salaries and work toward our financial forecast for debt service had an impact, but I am inspired by the work of this partnership in our first year. I appreciate the leadership of Cherry Creek in thinking outside of traditional partnerships in making this available to our student body.
Professional Development

Our school is fortunate to have weekly high quality Professional Development at RMSEL on Wednesday from 7:00 to 8:30 am, led by John Stene and Brittany Sundgren. Currently, our teachers engage in whole group PD twice per month, and then break out into team instructional PD twice per month to work at team levels in groups of four to complete various aspects on their Case Study design. Most recently, teams engaged in a peer critique protocol to receive feedback regarding their task description and guiding questions. Case study design is at the core of deep implementation of Expeditionary instructional practice. Each learning expedition is composed of three to four unique case studies that support understanding of the compelling expedition topic.

Open Forum

Kelly said that at this time, the board will offer the opportunity for the public to speak regarding items of interest or concern that are not listed on the agenda. It is not permissible to discuss district employees or individual student concerns. Persons wishing to speak to the board were asked to sign up, and speakers will address the board in the order listed. Each person will have 3 minutes in which to address the board, and one hour of time has been set aside for the Open Forum.

Guy Pizzo, parent of two students, said that he is here to voice his support for RMSEL. He has previously tried a lot of other schools for his family, and said RMSEL is by far the best. He has a student with special circumstances, and he said that the leadership team and staff that has been built at RMSEL have done an outstanding job in supporting his students. He expressed that he understands that there are some complaints being voiced in the community, and he does not believe the voices of the few support the feelings of the many.

Claire Isley, parent of one student, said she is here to express support of RMSEL and the administration. Her family is part of the LGBTQ+ community, and she has found a great home at RMSEL where they feel very welcomed and included. She wants to thank the administration, the board, and the school for that.

Sean Avery, parent of two students, said he is here because he has heard lots of rumors and murmurings through the grapevine of concerns regarding the administration and the community at RMSEL, which he believes should always be taken seriously. He first congratulated the board and the administration on the hard work that has taken place in regard to the bond issue and the future of RMSEL, and said that it really speaks to the vision the administration and board has had for some time now to position RMSEL for its future. This is why they want their kids to be at RMSEL. Sean said that when he started hearing rumors about what appears to be an organized effort to call to account the administration in a way that doesn’t feel like it’s about a particular issue, but a generalized effort, he was very concerned and wants to add his voice, find out who is representing whom, and what the real issues are. He stands in really strong support of Chad’s leadership at RMSEL, and believes he has demonstrated tremendous success.

Eric Dinkel, high school teacher, gave the board a copy of a letter from him, which he then read, and is included here for the minutes.

Lately, it has come to my attention that there is a group of parents who are trying to upend RMSEL in some significant way. Supposedly, they have reached out to teachers; however, I have not met with a teacher who has had any direct communication in regard to this in any way, and I have spoken with at least half the staff directly. Because I have not received any direct communication, what I have heard is all hearsay. So I won’t speculate. Instead, I would like to speak to my impression of culture at RMSEL with an emphasis on my interaction with administration.

I’ll start with this simple statement: I came back. I taught here for six years starting in 2010 and then got lured into a position in DPS. After one year, Chad reached out and asked if I would be interested in coming back. I decided to come back for a multitude of reasons that remain true, relevant, and important. Here are some reasons why RMSEL is a healthy, supportive environment from my perspective:

- RMSEL is not an obdurate institution. In my perception, the institution is in a state of continuous improvement. It seems like our school improvement plan each year is thoughtful and relevant to helping us get better.
  - In my classroom and curriculum specifically, I feel like I am pushed to always hone my craft and make learning more accessible to every student
• Administration is willing to support both student and teacher initiatives and new ideas. Some examples of many include:
  o The Outward Bound style long expedition in high school
  o The formation and continued support of the student government 4 years ago
  o The restoration program where high school students help maintain our school at the end of each day
  o My student lab assistant class and Moose’s (Marshall’s) new podcast class
  o Student initiated and run computer programming class
  o Formation of a mountain bike and rock climbing club
  o Creation of a daily fitness program
  o Yondr bag program to mitigate cell phone use
  o There are many more examples, yet I will run out of time

• We are working hard to stay in line with Kurt Hahn and our founder’s mission and vision of Expeditionary Learning. I reference our mission and vision statement often and especially after changes are made. I feel like all the changes we have made help us more directly align with the mission and vision.

Additionally, I think it is worth mentioning that early in my career at RMSEL I had a major conflict with Chad around a particular issue that impacted my high school team. Without going into the details of that issue, I think it is important to note my experience in navigating that conflict with Chad. Through our contention, I was heard and my opinion was valued. After the conflict passed, I felt like Chad was more than willing to facilitate a fresh start. It seemed to me that he was able to keep the conflict in one compartment and allow our professional relationship space to grow independent of that conflict. What I learned from that was very important: I might not always agree with Chad, but I will always be respected as a professional who is valued here. I think this is true for everyone at RMSEL – staff, students, and parents alike.

In the end, I am grateful to work in a place that demands much from me and supports me as I grow and evolve as a teacher. I am excited to work at a school that is so clearly driven by its mission and vision. I am empowered by RMSEL’s dedication to serve each and every student to a high degree of excellence. It is the reason why I came back to teach here and why I remain.

Please feel free to reach out with any further questions.

Sincerely,
Eric Dinkel
Instructor of Science / Crew Leader

Ulcca Hansen, parent of two students, said that there are five people here in her group who have asked that she speaks for the group, and asked for their time to be allotted to her. She expressed appreciation for the opportunity to address the board and the community. She read a prepared statement, and she is quoted here for the minutes.

Ulcca said, “being in leadership at a time when there are powerful feelings and competing narratives can be really hard, and that is particularly true at a school like RMSEL, that is not only trying to provide many different communities of families with a really incredible vision of education, but is doing so with a very unique governance and accountability structure. I want to start by acknowledging there are a lot of amazing things going on in the school, including the dedicated adults who took my son out for a week last week for a great experience. And so I want to thank Chad and leadership for all the great things you do to make this school work, and to Chad, I think that includes the time I was on the board when you were asked to stand for this school at a really hard time. And to the BOCES board members, we know this is an additional responsibility for you, in addition to your other district board, so we want to thank you for taking the time to represent families from your districts who are here and for keeping the PEBC values alive; it’s the partner organization that helped start this school. Kelly, I want to acknowledge as a former board chair, that the uncharted nature of what’s happening right now must be hard, and so I want to thank you for leading the board right now through the process, whatever it ends up being. I work with hundreds of schools around the country, I’ve been doing it for ten years. I’m very aware that every school has strengths and has challenges. I’m here today because during my eight years of engagement with RMSEL, I’ve experienced a shift in balance between its
strengths and its challenges. My husband and I were prompted to take action this year because the balance now seems to be weighted more toward challenges across a number of critical areas. We were one of four families who submitted a letter of concern to the board on August 29th following the by-laws that this body approved, and to give some context to everyone in the room, ours was the second letter that was submitted. The first letter was submitted through the Denver Family and Community Engagement office this summer, we don’t know by whom. It prompted questions about the experience that Denver families had at this school and so we responded to that query. We believe there have been at least six other communications, maybe more, from members of the RMSEL community since August, and they are all expressing their own interests and concerns. I also want to provide context again for those who may not know the four families that I’m speaking on behalf of today or haven’t actually read the letter that we submitted. We are long standing families, we have been active at the school over the course of a decade, on fieldwork, supporting crew leaders, working as parent organizers and volunteers, as a founder and members of the Parent Action Committee before it was dissolved by school leadership, applying to serve on DAC, and serving on the BOCES board. So despite what you may be hearing, we are not disengaged, uninformed, disgruntled families; we clearly stated in our letter that our intention is to strengthen, not weaken RMSEL, and to insure that it continues its mission of serving a student and family population that represents the diversity of our sending districts and provides amazing opportunities for students who might not otherwise have access. So our letter raised three specific concerns: high rates of teacher turnover and the impact this has on academics and school culture, declining family retention rates and associated equity considerations, and a school culture and approach to leadership more broadly that discourages active and robust parent engagement. We noted in the letter that there are patterns of behavior in the school that are not always immediately obvious to parents in their first few years or to BOCES board members because they tend to cycle off the board quite often, they often become apparent over time. These patterns of behavior take the form of sometimes neutral actions that actually have the impact of coalescing power, influence, and decision making. The actions have made RMSEL less accessible and less diverse over the years, and we believe they marginalize families, especially those who have less ability to engage or who express views and concerns that may not be aligned with school leadership. Many families have left the school as a result of such actions, so we could say that those choices have actually been successful in getting rid of problem voices. Our letter asked for the board’s support in hearing from those who have not had a voice at RMSEL when it comes to decisions around issues around academics, hiring, fee increases, parent engagement opportunities, policies, and equity concerns. We believe the fiduciary responsibility of this board is to serve the interest of the full student and family community in this school and district, not only the interest of school leadership, and this feels especially important when those interests might be divergent. Our letter ended with a suggestion and a request. The suggestion was that it might be helpful for a school the size of RMSEL, that is in its 26th year, to have an external party conduct and compile results of a comprehensive community survey of families, teachers past and present, and older students to identify what improvements to culture, climate, and academics might be worth more intentional focus on the part of BOCES and leadership. No matter how strong this school is, we hope we can agree that there is always room for improvement. Our request from the board was that you communicate directly with the RMSEL parent community about the issues the letter raised, to avoid rumors, innuendos, and other types of misrepresentations. According to those by-laws, we were entitled to a meeting with the board within five school days to discuss the concerns we addressed. We were entitled to a written response from the board within ten school days. It’s now been 19 school days and this board has not fulfilled either of those responsibilities. The only thing we did receive was an invitation from Chad, not the board, to meet with him, and we declined it, because with all due respect to Chad, all of us have been involved in the school for many years; during that time we’ve raised these and other concerns with him and other school leaders, only left to feel that we’ve been shut down in various ways. Our concerns have not been addressed using school leadership channels which is why we elevated them to the board. We believe the by-laws entitle us to a meeting with members of the school board directly to discuss and clarify our concerns. So we’re here this morning because we’d like to understand why the board hasn’t followed its own by-laws in the matter, and we want to reiterate our request for a meeting with the board, and to be given information about the steps that are being taken in response to our concerns and requests. There has been a sudden flurry of parent engagement efforts and DAC outreach, and it would indicate that the board has been in communication with school or DAC leadership around the concerns we expressed, and in light of our experience, we are concerned that these actions are a way to persuade the board that concerns are being addressed instead of actually taking a closer look at what might be happening within the culture of RMSEL more deeply. That is what has happened in the past, including when I was president of the board, and we were hearing parent concerns, and so I really urge the board to consider what you are hearing more seriously and take the time to learn more.
is going to require families and educators to have anonymity for the reasons that we addressed in our letter. As families who raised concerns in the first place, at some personal risk and cost to us and our children, we feel entitled to the same level of respect demonstrated through outreach and communication that this board has given to school leadership. We understand that school board rules may require us to meet with individual board members rather than the full board, and we are willing to make that happen. We also want to let you know that the board’s lack of communication with the community around the issues that we raised have consequences. People within this community, and all indications are that includes the DAC president, have been actively spreading inaccurate information about the letter and us; some specifics include that we claim to represent most parents, which we did not, that we are trying to burn down the house, that the letter requests the dissolution of the BOCES and the DAC, and the dissolution of this school altogether is at risk because of our letter. The four of us and others suspected of expressing our concerns have been receiving texts and emails from other parents, including crew parents, calling us immature, underhanded, manipulative, and suggesting we just leave. Two of us have already been sidelined in subtle ways from participating in our children’s fieldwork and a recent crew trip. We believe these behaviors violate the parent code of conduct we are asked to sign, we suggest that they don’t reflect the tone of civil engagement that RMSEL might want to model for its students, and more critically, the active fomenting of divisions within this community by member of school leadership over a respectfully articulated request for a community survey seems to underscore the points that we made in our letter. Our final question this morning is about the DAC by-laws that were posted on the RMSEL website this weekend. There are numerous provisions of these by-laws that seem like they might violate the spirit, if not the letter, of state law. The state requires DAC to be representative of the families served by the district or school, and the by-laws that were posted list very specific criteria that is going to make it hard for sub-sets of RMSEL parents to ever have a chance to serve on DAC. This lack of representation is exactly what led to some of the decisions that were cited in our letter as concerning. The by-laws also put an extraordinary amount of control in the hands of the DAC president and Executive Committee, positions which appear to be internally appointed and don’t seem to have clear term limits. Since state regulations require the BOCES board to either appoint DAC members directly or to set up a process to elect DAC members, we’d like to know if the board has actually approved these by-laws, and if so, why was no consideration given to some of the issues that we just raised. If you haven’t approved it, what process will be used to insure that the adopted by-laws address inclusivity concerns. Thank you for the chance, and I hope that hearing from us directly helps people to understand what we have actually asked for. It’s been a vitriolic few weeks in this community, which I feel says something about the culture.”

Ulcca then said she had her notes, a marked up copy of the DAC regulations, and copies of texts and emails, which she gave to the board members. Kelly asked Ulcca to identify who she was speaking on behalf of, and she said Jen and BJ Kittleson, Christy Purcell, and Paul Dantzer.

Mike Wheeler, parent of one student, said that he wanted to clarify that he has not sent or received any texts, emails, or phone calls regarding this particular issue. He said he is speaking as a qualified parent; he has four daughters, two whom are grown, and two who either have previously or are currently attending RMSEL. His grown children hold multiple degrees, one is an engineer, another a best-selling author; as such he feels that he knows best how to plan for the long-term education of his children. As a RMSEL parent, he has driven buses at least 30-40 times, and has been on ten different crew trips. Having been here 6 years, he said he could not be more pleased with the direction the board has taken and the long-term leadership that Chad has provided to RMSEL that allows him to plan for his girls’ best education. He also thanked Margaret Bierman for her constant and extensive leadership from the parents’ side in support of RMSEL. He said he wanted to address the concern about turnover. He pointed out a photo on the wall of the community room that are his daughter’s crewmates, and that most of those students have been here since kindergarten under a consistent, long-term plan that the board has supported, Chad has administered, and Margaret has supported, and he can only thank each of those for that.

Elizabeth Spruill said she has been a teacher for 19 years, and wanted the whole community to hear the letter that was sent to the board on behalf of the specialist team at RMSEL. She read the letter, and it is contained here for the minutes:

We have heard that there is a group of parents who have communicated with you about the state of our community at RMSEL. While we value our parent community and their opinions, we are concerned that they have represented
themselves as speaking for the staff, or for some of the staff. We’d like to offer our thoughts and speak for ourselves.

This letter represents the Specialist team, the High School team and other staff members. Our team has been a place of support for each of us, and while the number of years we’ve been at RMSEL varies from almost a year to 19 years, we choose to be at RMSEL and want to make that very clear. This year has started off well. We have new staff who seem to be a fantastic fit for our school; they bring new energy and are invested in the RMSEL community. Our staff retreat was well planned, challenging, and allowed us to mirror and experience what our students experience when they go on a backpacking trip. And our professional development has started strongly. It is intriguing, well-planned, and is allowing us to dig into how to make our case studies richer and more engaging for students.

We mention all of these things, because while we would never pretend that everything at RMSEL is always perfect, we want to highlight how things are going from our perspective as teachers right now. Our leaders, both the administration and the leaders of our professional development, strive to ensure that we have the space and tools we need to be successful.

There is always room for anyone to improve; each of us individually reflects on our work and tries to figure out how to be better at what we do. We look to our design principles, especially success and failure, to guide us as we seek to improve. We trust and have confidence that our leaders also work to get better at what they do as well. The choices they make are guided by our mission and their desire to implement that mission to the fullest degree that they are able. The information that we have heard is being communicated to you seems to misrepresent the current situation and status of RMSEL, and it doesn’t represent us.

We invite you to contact us individually or as a team should you need further information or wish to speak with us. Thank you for working to ensure RMSEL’s future and its success.

Sincerely,

Elizabeth Spruill, 19 years
Michelle Gouge, 5 years
Ian Silberman, 4 years

Eric Dinkel, 10 years
Lindsay Emery, 5 years
John Leavitt, 1 year

Colin Dodunski, 6 years
Marshall Moore, 5 years
Tarah Waters, 1 year

Elizabeth said that not all nine of the staff who signed the letter could be at the board meeting, and they wanted to make sure their voice is also being heard. She said personally, it always feels hard to be involved in contentious interactions, and that feels especially tricky when it gets to a place of “what you said is what I said,” and “what I said is what you said.” She appreciates the board trying to resolve this in a way that aligns with policies and honoring the voices of our community while still responding appropriately to comments that have been brought.

Gemma Marshall, parent of three students, said that she has been here going on ten years, and she wants to voice her support for RMSEL. She now has students in 9th grade, 7th grade, and 4th grade. She said that they have seen many changes while they’ve been here, especially with now having a high schooler. As a parent, it is important for parents to remain patient. She said regarding whether or not parents can go on trips, all parents want to go on trips, and it is important to understand that there have to be decisions made that best support the children. She said she feels that overall children at RMSEL are thriving in so many ways, academically, socially, and personally. They are all in, and want to thank the board for what they do for RMSEL.

Ray Weldon, Facilities Manager at RMSEL, said that he has been at RMSEL for six years. He wants to address the issue of possible unfair treatment at RMSEL. He said he is here five days a week, eight hours a day, and he has never seen or heard of unfair treatment at RMSEL. He is the son of a police officer, and said that one thing he has learned in life is that people always want to tell you how to do your job. He said he asking that the board gives the staff at RMSEL a chance to do their job. He said the reason he is here today is because he was approached by one of the parents and asked to contact the board about potential issues with the culture and climate at the school. He said there is nothing wrong with the school.
Jennifer Peterson, parent of two students, said she has been here three years. She has been a crew parent for two years, has been a passage panelist, have been involved in a number of crew trips, and have been involved in a number of projects at the school. She and her husband choose to be at RMSEL. Her daughter attended kindergarten and began first grade at their neighborhood DPS school. Although it is a great school, they saw the constraints of traditional methodologies as compared to what is available at RMSEL. She said the day they received the phone call about having a spot at RMSEL a month into the school year, they were literally dancing around their kitchen, and that feeling has not changed to this day. She said from day one, they have received nothing but acceptance and encouragement to be involved. She said she even feels like she has had personal coaching and modeling in how to be a crew parent and support the crew leaders. Her son attended preschool for three years before starting kindergarten at RMSEL, and they got to know the dean well last year because he spent a lot of time in her office. He is a typical young boy with a ton of energy, and she feels that the way his behavior was addressed was incredible. Administration saw her son as a boy who needs time to mature, that he needs support, collaborative effort from teachers, administration, the school psychologist and them as parents, to determine the best way to help him. She feels that it spoke to the administration’s commitment to work with parents to help their kids be successful. She said that earlier this year she reached out to Chad and Margaret about a couple of parents being able to meet and talk on campus outside of school hours, to just gather and chat. It wasn’t something that needed to happen during school. She said that the response from Chad and Margaret was not only well thought out, it was considerate, and they said they wanted to work with her to find options for it, but they want to make sure they understood how they are supporting the rest of the school and not creating potential conflict in the situation. She said time and time again, she has been so encouraged, and well before this board meeting, she reached out to Chad to express appreciation for his open and consistent communication with parents about ongoing situations.

Ross Odegaard, parent of three students, said that he has been involved with RMSEL for a decade. He said they have had the best experience he could have imagined from the perspective of a parent that wants their children to grow and develop character and skills for learning. He said he wants to express his support for Chad and Margaret as the chair of DAC. He said the administration of the school has been second to none. Ross is a business owner who has worked with many businesses in and around the state and internationally. The level of care shown by administration and staff, for his students specifically and personally, not just as a collective student body, is one of intense care for their best outcomes. There was an accident that happened last year with his student and another student that resulted in an injury to his child, which resulted in her being out of school for a number of weeks. There was some miscommunication between staff and parents about the incident that led to misunderstanding of what had happened. When their concern was discussed with administration, admittedly with a high level of emotion on his part, it was very well handled, better than he expected. RMSEL has been a fantastic place for his kids to learn and grown. His son who is now a 9th grader moved to a different school only because his needs are different than the needs of his other three students. His students are thriving in the structure at RMSEL, and they love it. Their character has been developing and is continuing to prepare them for who they will be as adults. They have been a part of RMSEL for a long time; they saw the administration before and know the administration now, and have full confidence in the way the administration is running the school; they are doing an excellent job.

Keith Bierman, parent of one student, said that they have been at RMSEL for 11 years. Their older son had some challenges, and they became very well acquainted with the previous administration, which was sufficiently hostile to the point that they considered suing the school and suing DPS who was providing services to their son at the time. Then Chad came to RMSEL, and they got to know him very quickly, and were duly impressed. They are still at RMSEL, and obviously did not sue. It has become a consistently better school during Chad’s administration, and he hopes that RMSEL will continues on its current trajectory. Regarding the issues that have been raised, he said the board does need to consider the legitimate concern regarding staff turnover. He said that most of the teachers who’ve left RMSEL have expressed that they are leaving due to receiving a $10-20 thousand pay raise by going to another district. Taxpayers pay their mill levy to their specific districts, but none of that money makes it to RMSEL. RMSEL therefore has a lower cost per capita for the staff to split. He said that in respect to some of the issues that have been raised, he has personally seen and read some of the direct texts, which include slanderous, defaming, baseless accusations that have been made, and finds this troubling to say the least. He has also has read letters that went to the board which detailed some of these issues. He said he is shocked and appalled. While he is not a lawyer, he serves on a special district board, and he believes that a lawyer advising an elected official how to evade the Colorado Open Records Act is highly unethical and it...
is incumbent upon the board to take action against, not the perpetrator, but the board member who colluded in that conspiracy. He said the board he serves upon has been advised by their legal counsel that they would all have personal liability and their insurance would not cover them individually for knowingly and openly violating the law. To compound things, the particular director saw fit to pass the slanderous and libelous accusations to multiple other districts, which he assumes are also bound by the Colorado Open Records Act, and is therefore effectively promulgating the baseless accusations.

Shawna Ballinger, parent of one student, said that her son is absolutely thriving at RMSEL. She said that she has been a recipient of some of the emails from the other side, and wants to clarify some of the inaccuracies that were presented by the spokesperson for the group of four families today. The emails encouraged families who did not have any complaints to not contact the board, to not respond, and thereby quiet the voices of the people who have positive experiences. She expressed that the position presented by the group today is a misrepresentation that is unfair. There were also misrepresentations made about the way that DAC handles things. There has been content in some of the letters that DAC meets behind closed doors, excludes people, and none of that is accurate. Shawna said she has been to DAC meetings and is on the DAC board; the meetings are held with open doors, notices of meetings are publicly posted, everybody has access to attend the meetings. She said she wants to point out there are a lot more inaccuracies that were stated today. The emails that went out to parents were not just kind emails that said it was just a small group, they said it was a majority of the people, and they were encouraging only people that had negative things to say to respond, and it was never that if you had positive experiences you should respond also. She said that her experience at RMSEL from kindergarten to high school, even though her son is only in 4th grade, she has worked even with high school and it has been highly positive. She said that the representation that high school is not involved in DAC is also inaccurate; the high school student who is on the DAC board is present in the board meeting today. The representation today has been very unfair, and RMSEL is amazing. Having been at a school before RMSEL that was highly dysfunctional, she knows the difference. She knows what is to have a principal who not only cares about the students, but sets super high expectations for the students and expects them to reach them. She appreciates that. Her son is not a squeaky wheel or troublemaker, but neither is he an “exceller,” but Chad has held him accountable for everything that he does. He does it in a positive way with a glorious attitude. He knows things about her son that no other teacher or principal has known in the past, he knows her son not just by name, but as a person. She is completely in support of RMSEL and Chad as the executive director.

Paul Dantzer, parent of four students, said he agrees there are positive things happening at RMSEL. He denied that the emails sent by their group contained the comments shared by the previous parent. A dialogue began back and forth between Paul and the previous parent, and Kelly interrupted and stopped the dialogue. She said this meeting is not the place for personal confrontation to take place and reminded them that students are present and this is not the way to conduct business. Paul said there are emails that have been sent by other parents, which resulted in emails coming back with positive experiences, and that their group wants the board to hear the good and the bad. He said that is all their group requested, but they haven’t gotten a response.

Kelly said that the board is actively in the process of arranging times for meeting with the parents who sent the letter. Mike Wheeler asked if the meeting that is being requested by the group of four families is going to be a closed door meeting for only the families with complaints, or if other families will be welcome to attend that meeting as well. He said since their group keeps citing legal precedent today, he wants to know what the rules say, and if everyone is allowed to attend and will be provided equal access. Kelly said that answer will be provided at a later time.

Janice made a motion that the board enter into executive session, per C.R.S. § 24-6-402(4)(b) for the purposes of meeting with the BOCES’ attorney to receive legal advice on specific legal questions concerning compliance with RMSEL’s complaint procedures. Sue seconded the motion, which was then unanimously approved, and the board entered into executive session.

After a period of time in executive session, the board returned. Krista made a motion to reconvene the regular BOCES meeting, and Sue seconded. The motion was unanimously approved, and the board reconvened the regularly scheduled meeting.
Consent Agenda
There were no items on the consent agenda.

Action Items
There were no action items on the agenda.

Report Items
- Budget Update – Julie asked the board if they had any questions regarding the financial statements and management summary that was sent to them. Krista mentioned statutory mandates regarding PERA that will take effect in the next school year, and said it may be something the board should discuss the next meeting how staff is being informed about changes, and updating the community about how we prepare in case of a recession. Kelly asked for a motion to accept the management summary and financial statements. Janice made a motion to approve the management summary and financial statements as presented and Krista seconded. The motion was unanimously approved. The management summary is included below in its entirety for the record.

Rocky Mountain School of Expeditionary Learning
Management Summary
September 24, 2019

Audit Update
The fieldwork portion of the 6/30/19 audit is scheduled to begin in under two weeks on 10/7/19. The list of schedules and other documents required by the auditors was received 9/9/19. Work is currently underway to finish closing the prior fiscal year, prepare schedules, reconciliations, confirmations, and gather all of the information required by the auditors in order to meet the fieldwork deadline. We have been informed that there will be a new managing partner from CliftonLarsonAllen assigned to our audit as Mark Elmshauser is retiring.

Revenue
Per pupil revenue (PPR) is typically paid from DPS on a monthly basis after the first 25% is paid for the first quarter of the fiscal year. The first 25% of PPR funding ($827,653.57) was received in July. It is assumed that one of the monthly payments in the first quarter of 2020 will incorporate any changes in the State’s supplemental budget, if applicable, to reflect any adjustments or rescissions from CDE. PPR was originally budgeted at $8,735.13/FTE X 385 FTE, and $8,735.13/FTE X 379 FTE (10/1/18 count) is the PPR amount that was received was received in July. The PPR and FTE difference funded at 25% explain the budget variance. This line item will be adjusted with the revised budget submitted in January 2020 to reflect the under-enrollment in the high school.

Per the Budget Appropriation resolution approved by the board in June 2019, $350,000 of beginning fund balance is reflected on the budget for Prior Year Budget Carryover (#43503). This is in alignment with the provisions of GASB 54 and the categorization of fund balance assigned for budget carryover.

Per HB 12-1345, $201,186.16 was received in August 2019 to assist the BOCES with meeting state educational priorities determined by CDE. These funds are used to employ key personnel to implement a Response to Intervention (RtI) process for monitoring student achievement with 20% of our school population in grades K-12.

In August, we received $3,196.03 per the READ Act to support reading intervention for students in grades K-3 as identified from state assessment scores. This line item will be adjusted with the revised budget in January.

The amounts reflected in the Fieldwork Carryover-Landmark Trips (#43600) line items include fieldwork fees carried over from 2018-2019 as well as 10% landmark trip allocation from the 2019-2020 fieldwork fees. These amounts are allocated toward funding the landmark 5th grade Sailing trip, 6th grade Yellowstone trip, 8th grade Civil Rights trip, and the high school Colorado Trail trip.

As of August 31, 2019, budgeted enrollment was 385 FTE and actual enrollment was at 367 FTE. This is the reason for the variance showing in the fieldwork fee grouping (#44200), transportation fee (#44500), instructional support supply fee (#44600) and technology fee (#44700) line items. These line items will be adjusted with the revised budget in January.

Classroom revenue (#46400, #46500 and #46550) represents the student contribution toward the 5th grade Sailing ($5,000), 6th grade Yellowstone ($4,600) and 8th grade Civil Rights ($7,050) landmark trips.
School-based fundraising revenue (#47000) is significantly higher than budgeted due to the deferral of DAC fundraising revenue from 2018-2019. This line item will be adjusted with the revised budget in January.

Miscellaneous income (#49000) is greater than anticipated due to the number of student enrollment relinquishments and the non-refundable fieldwork fee deposit. This line item will be adjusted with the revised budget in January.

Interest Income (#80000) – this line item is greater than budget and will be adjusted on the revised budget.

**Expenses**

Line items with notable variances or exceptions are explained below.

Lease #60020 – this variance is due to a timing difference related to the lease payments of $75,000 to DPS which are due 11/1 and 5/1.

Construction (General) #60032 – this variance is due to the construction of a wall in the old Spanish classroom in order to create two pull-out classrooms for Learning Specialists. This wall construction was not anticipated when the budget was created last May. This expense line item will be adjusted with the revised budget in January 2020.

Special Education Fees #65020 – this budget line item will be adjusted on the revised budget submitted in January to reflect actual enrollment as of October 2019 count.

Classroom Supplies #66300, #66400, #66500 & #66600 – these budget line items will be adjusted on the revised budget submitted in January to reflect actual enrollment as of October 2019 count as well as the staffing decrease in high school.

Fieldwork #67000 – these budget line items will be adjusted on the revised budget submitted in January to reflect actual enrollment as of October 2019 count as well as the staffing decrease in high school.

Financial Aid – there remains $23,836.12 in fieldwork fee financial aid (#67800), $2,640.00 in transportation financial aid (#67830), $10,560.00 in instructional support financial aid (#67860) and $3,520.00 in technology financial aid (#67870). These line items will be adjusted in January to reflect actual enrollment as of October 2019 count day. Any unused funds in these line items will be used to offset future budget shortfalls.

Under the RMSEL’s fieldwork fee structure, families with three (3) or more children at RMSEL have the option to take a 10% discount on their fieldwork fees. To date, six (6) families have opted to take advantage of this discount. Any unused funds in these line items will be used to offset future budget shortfalls.

**District Accountability Committee (DAC) Report**

Margaret said that the parent involvement on DAC has increased from three members to nine, which provides opportunity for a significant number of voices. The RMSEL Rally involved about 90 families, which was about 250 people. Work is beginning on the Colorado Gives Day. Kelly asked Margaret to express thanks to DAC for all of their work.

**Discussion Items**

- **School/Community Relations Policy Review** – Chad said that Kelly had requested that Chad pull the Community Relations policies from CASB, and they were all sent to the board in the board packet. At this point, RMSEL is operating under the student policies regarding concerns and grievances. The review of these community relations policies will be tabled until the next meeting.

- **BOCES Manual** – Krista said that at the last meeting, she and Carrie Olson agreed to serve as a sub-committee to review the proposed manual. They have not had the chance to meet, but have both read it, and it looks amazing and is a great document to help the board with better governance and in orientating new board members. She asked that questions or comments be added to the next agenda, with the intent of approving the manual then. Dan said that he thought it would be good to add some type of manual review. There is a fairly high degree of turnover on the BOCES board, and as a matter of process and practice, he thinks it should be encouraged that whoever serves on the BOCES agrees to do so for a four year term. He isn’t sure if this is possible, but believes it would strengthen the board. Concerning the role of the officers, each member operates differently within their own districts, it has been informally agreed that the chair responds to public concerns, but he thinks it would be good practice to put in the
manual that the chair will respond and blind carbon copy all of the board members on every response that is sent. In terms of acknowledging that a concern has been received, rather than it being an individual voice responding, it be a voice of the board responding. Hopefully, individual voices can be shared during the BOCES meetings in open dialogue.

He said that focusing on policy and expectations, including the board’s expectations of Chad, will make it clear to the community what the ends are as an organization. Dan said that his term on the board will end after one more RMSEL meeting but he is always available and happy to participate. Kelly said that she has told her board that she has been here for 6 years, and could be available for possibly another two years.

- BOCES 2019-2020 Membership Transition – Chad commented that Dan is trying to find an APS representative to join the BOCES in his absence. Kelly said that in January after elections, it is uncertain what will happen as far as local boards and job assignments.
- BOCES 2019-2020 Officer Assignments – this will be a conversation that takes place in January.

**Items for Future Agenda**

Outside of the items mentioned in the previous discussion items there are no additional items for the future agenda.

**Adjournment**

Kelly asked for a motion to adjourn the meeting. Sue made a motion to adjourn, and Krista seconded the motion. The meeting was unanimously adjourned.

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Kelly Perez, President

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Janice McDonald, Secretary/Treasurer